



14 *Going the Distance:* CHOOSING A CAR FOR TEENS

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Abhh, memories...

Remember your first car? Getting the first car is every teen's dream—and every parent's nightmare. When teens get cars they can call their own, their amount of driving shoots up, as does their risk of crashes and injuries.

What are safe cars for teens?

- ✓ **Midsize or larger.** *In collisions with other vehicles, larger vehicles protect their occupants better than smaller ones. However, you do not need the largest vehicle to minimize crash-related injuries.*
- ✓ **Newer.** *Although airbags are present in nearly all vehicles built in the last 10 years, the technology is getting better and better. Also, newer cars are better structurally, so that—in a crash—they better absorb the energy of the crash and protect the occupants.*
- ✓ **“Sedate.”** *A basic vehicle (such as a family sedan) can encourage more mature driving and reduce the chances your teen will be in a speed-related crash.*

What cars should you avoid?

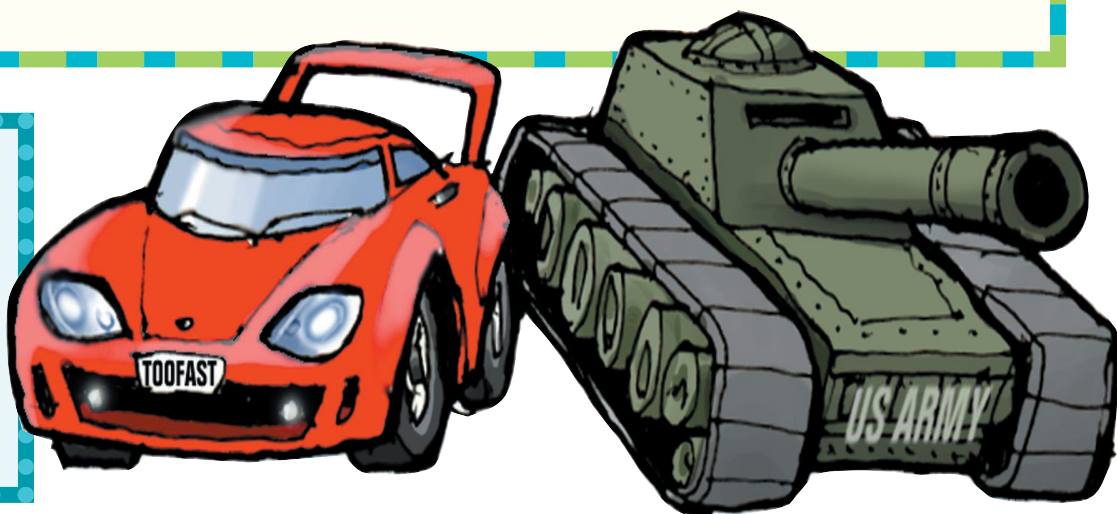
- ✓ **An SUV or pickup.** *They are somewhat harder to handle than regular cars and go out of control much more easily in an emergency. Plus, they roll over easily.*
- ✓ **A high-powered or sporty car.** *They help create a mind-set of faster and more aggressive driving, for the driver and for the drivers of nearby vehicles. The result can be faster, riskier driving and greater danger.*

What can parents do?

WAIT before getting your teen a vehicle. When teens get a vehicle they call their own, they often drive twice as much as before. Much of this extra driving is likely to be high-risk driving, such as at night, with teen passengers, on high-speed roads, or in bad weather. Then, when s/he does get a first car, make it a safe one. Check the safety ratings and choose a vehicle with good crash protection. Safety ratings can be found on the following websites: www.highwaysafety.org; www.nhtsa.dot.gov; www.usaaedfoundation.org.

Parents agree!

Putting off getting teens their own cars protects her/him from unnecessary risk!





Checkpoints Experiences

"We let Deron get a car shortly after he was licensed. He won't admit it, but I'm sure even he thinks it was a mistake. He's working extra hours to pay for the insurance and upkeep. As a result, his schoolwork and other activities have suffered. It would have been better if he'd just driven one of our cars."—**Rhonda Hamilton, mother of 16-year-old Deron**

"Lateisha only got her own car when there was a real need for it. It was about a year after she got her license. Until then she drove a family car. It was cheaper that way, and we felt better because the car she drove was bigger, newer, and safer. And she could still drive whenever she really needed to."—**Terri Watson, mother of 17-year-old Lateisha**

"After Juan had been driving for a while, we bought a new car and he 'inherited' the old one. He immediately wanted to drive everywhere with his friends, but we had the Checkpoints Agreement and he stayed within his limits. We all are finding it a positive experience."—**Luis Gilberto, father of 17-year-old Juan**



Checkpoints comments...

Teens can almost always arrange to use a family car—they don't miss out by waiting to have their own car. While they wait, it's less expensive for everybody. The teens can also save money so that their first car is a better one—newer, more reliable, and safer.

BOTTOM LINE

Hold off this big decision until a car is really needed, then choose carefully!

Delay getting a car for your teen—and make sure the first car is a safe one!

